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ABSTRACT

Many on both "the left" and "the right" passionately oppose an outcome-based approach to education, although their reasons are different. A focus on results, on what children actually learn and how well they learn it, enables taxpayers to hold educators accountable for results. But this apparent good idea has led to considerable conflict. A major reason for this conflict is that states turned over the task of defining outcomes to the educational officials most threatened by the process. Educators have proceeded to promote rather vague outcomes, often reflecting politically correct positions, instead of knowledge, skills, and cognitive academic outcomes. Education bureaucrats have taken a sensible idea and distorted its meaning so that accountability is virtually impossible. This has occurred in several states, most notably in Minnesota. The analysis of the controversy in Minnesota leads to two suggestions for escaping the impasse: establishing high and uniform academic standards, with a system of accountability with real consequences for success and failure, and encouraging greater diversity in kinds of schools and types of instruction available through expanded choice programs. (SLD)

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Outcome-Based Education

Has It Become More Affliction Than Cure?

Bruno V. Manno

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Foreword

Outcome-based education is grounded in the idea that academic success is best measured by what children actually *learn*, as opposed to how long they're parked in their seats, how expansively multicultural their textbooks may be, or how much money is spent on their schooling. It's premised (theoretically at least) in real results, not pleasant intentions, and in assuring accountability in American education -- twin goals which have been articulated most energetically over the last two decades by conservative critics such as William J. Bennett and Chester E. Finn, Jr.

So how has OBE come to be the nation's nastiest education controversy; the target of so much anger on the part of conservative parents and leaders particularly? Especially so, one might add, in Minnesota.

According to Bruno V. Manno, while many on the right have not always been perfectly on-target in their opposition (see his section on the "Nostalgist Fallacy"), cause for conflict lies mainly with those in charge of America's public schools.

Writing in the Executive Summary of "Outcome-Based Education: Has It Become More Affliction Than Cure?" Dr. Manno argues: ". . . states turned over the crucial task of defining outcomes to the very education officials most threatened by the process. Although having adopted, in general principle, a focus on results, educators have proceeded to promote vague outcomes emphasizing values, attitudes and behaviors -- often reflecting quasi-political and ideologically correct positions -- rather than knowledge, skills, and other cognitive academic outcomes."

Or if you will, OBE is in fact a good idea if properly understood and practiced. It does not warrant blanket, now jargonesque denunciations leveled by many conservatives. But at the same time, the fact that OBE is just one more in a long line of promising initiatives, first captured and then bent by assorted powers that be, both in and out of public education, is reason for large caution and pause.

This is Center of the American Experiment's longest essay yet. But its length is warranted by the precise care taken by Dr. Manno in defining OBE, framing it in thematic and historical context, describing how it has played out in various states (Minnesota most of all), and suggesting means of reforming this latest of scholastic reforms. Yes, this is a

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conservative critique. But ideology aside, it's also the most copious analysis I've seen on the subject.

Once more, this is especially the case regarding Minnesota, about which the author writes, ". . . nowhere has there been a longer and more concerted effort to establish an outcome-based approach to student learning than in Minnesota. The effort took root in the 1970s and continues to this day."

Bruno Manno is a Senior Fellow with the Indianapolis-based Hudson Institute, and previously served as Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, in the U.S. Department of Education. He works mostly out of the Institute's Washington office, and holds a Ph.D. from Boston College.

On a more personal note, Dr. Manno served as Chief of Staff in the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement when I worked there as Director of Outreach, among other things, in the late '80s. He's a good friend and colleague, in addition to being a penetrating and experienced student of learning in America.

This study was first commissioned by American Experiment. We were joined midway by the Hudson Institute, which published a shorter version earlier this summer. All have profited from this collaboration, for which I'm exceptionally thankful.

American Experiment members receive free copies of all Center publications, including "Outcome-Based Education." Additional copies are $4 for members and $5 for nonmembers. Bulk discounts are available for schools, civic groups and other organizations. Please note our phone and address on the first page of this Foreword for membership and other information, including a listing of other Center publications and audio tapes.

Thanks very much, and as always, I welcome your comments.

Mitchell B. Pearlstein
President

OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION
Has It Become More Affliction Than Cure?

Bruno V. Manno

Executive Summary

There has been a fundamental shift in the last third of this century -- which is not to say in all quarters -- when it comes to effectively evaluating educational quality. Previously, the conventional wisdom judged quality in terms of inputs: intentions and efforts, institutions and services, resources and spending. In more recent years, however, focus has increased on outputs: products and results, outcomes and effects -- with an emphasis on core academic subjects. The primary question to be asked no longer is, "How much are we spending?" But rather, "What are our children learning, and how well are they learning it?"

Conservative policy analysts helped set the stage for this revolution in education by noting that student achievement kept declining while spending on education kept increasing, particularly starting with the Great Society era. The education establishment, however, showed little enthusiasm for this new approach. Why? A focus on results enables parents, politicians and others to better gauge whether investments in schools actually lead to children doing well academically. It better enables taxpayers to hold educators accountable for results.

Yet despite this lack of enthusiasm by many in education, the outcome-based approach began to win widening support in the mid-1980s from elected officials (such as governors, legislators and mayors) and lay people (such as business leaders, newspaper editors and parents). These "civilians" began to demand that "education experts" make themselves accountable to the public.

Today many on both the right and left passionately oppose an outcome-based approach to education, though clearly not for identical reasons. "Outcome-Based Education: Has It Become More Affliction Than Cure?" explains why such a good idea has led to such conflict.

A major reason for the clash is that states turned over the crucial task of defining outcomes to the very education officials most threatened by the process. Although having adopted, in general principle, a focus on results, many educators have proceeded to promote vague outcomes emphasizing values, attitudes and behaviors -- often reflecting quasi-political and ideologically correct positions -- rather than knowledge, skills and other cognitive academic outcomes.

In so doing, education bureaucrats have taken a sensible principle -- an emphasis on results -- and hijacked its meaning so that accountability is actually made impossible. They have used the very language of accountability to avoid being held accountable.

The paper shows how this process has occurred in various states, particularly Minnesota. It also proposes a twofold policy for escaping the impasse.

First, the essay recommends establishing high and uniform *academic* standards, accompanied by a system of accountability with real consequences for success and failure.

And second, it encourages greater diversity in the kinds of schools, and types of instruction, available to students and their parents through expanded choice programs.

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Bruno V. Manno

Center of the American Experiment
Minneapolis, Minnesota
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Introduction

The fight over outcome-based education is arguably the nation's fiercest current education battle. Those identified as "on the left" claim that opposition to OBE comes primarily from "ultraconservative" groups such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. For instance, Matthew Freeman, research director for People for the American Way, says, "the national organizations taking [OBE] on are almost exclusively religious-right organizations."[1]

It is true that many of those identified as "on the right" do express pointed and passionate objections to outcome-based education. For example, Schlafly, President of the Eagle Forum, says, "OBE is converting the 3 R's to the 3 D's: Deliberately Dumbed Down."[2] Peg Luksic, a nationally recognized leader of the OBE opposition, comments, "Bureaucrats really do believe that schools are the ones that should raise children. Our children are not and never will be creatures of the state. We will no longer sit quietly while the state forces its mandates on our schools and our children."[3]

Opposition to OBE, however, does not come from the right only. Some educators are glad to shun a focus on outcomes and results. They prefer to keep the focus on inputs and resources.

From another perspective, American Federation of Teachers union President Albert Shanker --hardly an ultraconservative -- is just as pointed and passionate in objecting to OBE: "OBE's vaguely worded outcomes . . . encourage business as usual . . . and [do] nothing to raise student achievement." In saying this, Shanker appears to agree with many conservatives, such as former Secretary of Education William Bennett, who advocate a focus on student learning -- academic outcomes -- as the only route to accountability in education.

Ironically, it was conservative policy analysts who helped create the emphasis on outcomes. Some, therefore, are perplexed by the current state of affairs. Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Education during the Reagan administration, has said, "The word 'outcomes' has become tainted. For several years, I was among those promoting the [focus on outcomes], never imagining the twist it would take. *Mea culpa.*"[4]

It is not immediately clear why defining outcomes or results all students should master should meet with such an outcry. Nonetheless, the issue has become a wildfire. It involves people from all political persuasions, and has dominated all sorts of forums and policy processes.

Is OBE a promising cure to what ails public education? Or is it another disease spread by education bureaucrats through an already ailing system known for succumbing to one fad after another? To answer those questions and provide a perspective on outcome-based education, this paper examines three issues and offers a policy strategy that charts a plausible way out of the conflagration.

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[1]Lonnie Harp, "Pennsylvania Parent Becomes Mother of 'Outcomes' Revolt," *Education Week*, September 22, 1993, 21.
[2]Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong With Outcomes Based Education?" *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, May 1993, 4.
[3]Harp, 20.
[4]Chester E. Finn, Jr., "The Return of the Dinosaurs," *National Review*, September 20, 1993, 40.

First, I describe a radical and far-reaching shift in the way we judge educational policy: the shift from inputs to outcomes. This discussion includes a viewpoint on the meaning of education outcomes offered by one of the most important groups advancing U.S. education reform since the mid-1980s -- the nation's state governors.

Second, I present a conflicting view that has evoked much of the general public's negative reaction to outcome-based education. It has deep roots in the educational philosophy called progressivism, especially the thought of John Dewey and the idea that schools should make a "new social order." Its most well-known popularizers today are William G. Spady and those who preach the gospel of "transformational OBE."

Third, I focus on what has occurred in two states -- Pennsylvania and Minnesota, though mostly the latter -- which have pursued outcomes approaches. Their experiences are similar to those of other states, which I also review. More than anything, we see in these efforts well-intentioned, elected public officials blindly handing responsibility for specifying outcomes to groups dominated by education views nearly antithetical to those the public officials thought they were mandating. The typical result is a list comprising mostly transformational outcomes that arise from the progressive idea that schools should make a new social order. This discussion illustrates how "the devil is in the details" whenever reformers advocate an outcome-based approach to education.

Finally, I outline a twofold strategy -- emphasizing expanded school choice -- for resolving differences between supporters and opponents of OBE, as well as chart a plausible future course for outcome-based education.

What are education outcomes?

The last third of this century has seen a fundamental shift in the way educational quality is determined. Previously, the conventional wisdom judged quality in terms of inputs: intentions and efforts, institutions and services, resources and spending. The only other way to gauge educational quality and effectiveness is to focus on outputs: goals and ends, products and results, outcomes and effects.

The conventional wisdom received a radical challenge in the mid-1960s, when the U.S. Office of Education asked sociologist James S. Coleman to conduct a major study of the equality of educational opportunities in America. His report, released in 1966, suggested that inputs might not have a strong effect on equality of student achievement. Reflecting on this study, Coleman has written the following:

> The major virtue of the study as conceived and executed lay in the fact that it did not accept [the input] definition, and by refusing to do so, has had its major impact in shifting policy attention from its traditional focus on comparisons of inputs (the traditional measures of school quality used by school administrators: per-pupil expenditures, class size, teacher salaries, age of building and equipment, and so on) to a focus on output.[5]

When judging educational quality, either we focus on what schools spend -- or one of its many substitutes -- or we focus on what students achieve; what they know and can do. Those who advocate a focus on outcomes in judging educational quality hold one common belief: We must specify what we expect all our children to learn, and we must test them to determine whether they have learned it.

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[5]James S. Coleman, "The Evaluation of 'Equality of Educational Opportunity,'" in Frederick Mosteller and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, eds., *On Equality of Educational Opportunity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 149-150.

In an outcome approach, success is measured by the extent to which the inputs raise educational achievement. Changes are worth making if there is some assurance that they will produce the expected outcomes. The question then becomes, toward what outcomes should the schools aim?

The focus on outcomes won some converts in the years after Coleman's study. Nonetheless, the resource approach to judging quality continued to dominate American education.

Widespread attention

The event that galvanized the nation's attention and began a widespread call for fundamental reforms that would improve student achievement -- the outcomes of education -- was the April 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This study declared America to be a "nation at risk . . . [whose] educational foundations . . . are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."[6] The report's basic criticism was that America's young people were not learning enough, and it made clear that the input focus and resource-based strategies of the mid-1960s and the Great Society had failed to improve the nation's education results significantly. Weak academic achievement, therefore, was the key education problem.

This conclusion was repeated in dozens of other reports that soon followed. These reports helped place exceptional pressure on politicians and policymakers to improve educational performance. This led to a development unprecedented in the history of U.S. education: The nation's states became hotbeds of education reform. Elected officials (such as governors, legislators, and mayors) and lay people (such as business leaders and newspaper editors) set out to wrest control of education from the education experts (school superintendents, school boards, and other members of the education establishment). These "civilians" began to demand that the "education experts" make themselves accountable to the public.

Coleman's early work was of immense importance to the push for a focus on outcomes, as were the later efforts of elected policymakers and other civilians seeking to make educators accountable for results. Even some educators hinted at the need to focus on results and deregulate the "means" of education. For example, in the 1970s the move to establish minimum competency tests for students reflected a focus on results. In the 1980s, this competency focus spread to other areas such as preparation of teachers and administrators.

Also part of this movement was "mastery learning," an educational method popularized by Benjamin Bloom in the late 1960s, which became widespread (some would call it an education fad) beginning in the early 1980s. In Bloom's words, "Given sufficient time (and appropriate types of help), 95 percent of students (the top 5 percent and the next 90 percent) can learn a subject up to high levels of mastery."[7]

In other words, outcomes are primary, and instruction -- especially the time used to master outcomes -- should vary. This approach reversed the usual practice of allowing for little or no day-to-day variation in time used for teaching different subjects. These and other such efforts set the stage for the watershed events that soon followed.

New momentum, national goals

Perhaps the single most important effort to turn the focus toward outcomes was that of the National Governors' Association (NGA). They gave the outcome approach far-reaching policy attention

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[6]The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 5.
[7]Benjamin S. Bloom, *Every Kid Can: Learning for Mastery* (Washington, D.C.: College/University Press, 1973), 10.

beginning in the mid-1980s, when they decided to devote 12 months to investigating one subject -- education. They focused on education for one direct and simple reason: "Better schools mean better jobs. To meet stiff competition from workers in the rest of the world, we must educate ourselves and our children as we never have before. . . . Schools and school districts [must] produce better results."[8] In short, the governors cast their lot with those arguing that the time had come to place primary emphasis on what people learn, the outcomes they achieve.

The approach endorsed by the governors gathered further momentum in 1989, when President Bush invited them to meet at an Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia. The president and the governors agreed to set six ambitious national education goals -- outcomes -- from early childhood through lifelong learning that they would work to achieve by the year 2000.
Briefly, the goals state that by the year 2000:

- All children will start school ready to learn.
- At least 90 percent of all students will graduate from high school.
- All students will demonstrate competence in challenging subject matter.
- U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science.
- Every adult will be literate.
- Every school will be safe and drug-free.

One fundamental idea underlay these goals. In the words of the summit participants, "We want to swap red tape for results . . . [build] a system of accountability that focuses on results . . . and issue annual Report Cards on progress."[9] In 1991, the U.S. Department of Education began supporting efforts to develop voluntary national education standards and tests.

Creating world-class standards involves three things. First, clear definitions, within subject areas, of what students should know and be able to do -- content standards. Second, achievement levels that specify what depth of knowledge is "good enough" -- performance standards. And third, tests that report whether children are learning what they are taught.

These standards and tests, however, should not be higher hurdles for fewer to jump. They must raise expectations and let all students know what to aim for. High standards should be the primary way to boost the academic achievement of all children and provide them with an equal opportunity to learn. Widespread access to high standards that reflect a rich and challenging curriculum advances the twin goals of educational excellence and equity.

Finally, standards need not lead to uniformity, standardization, or a national curriculum. The means to achieving them can and should be left to individual schools, teachers, parents, and communities.

A good idea gone wrong

Defined in the manner just presented, it seems common sense that outcome-based education should meet with little resistance and even become quite popular, especially among consumers of education. Parents want to know what the schools expect their children to know and do and how well their children are learning what they are taught.

Indeed, the emphasis on education outcomes is rapidly growing. The Education Commission of the States reports that 25 states have developed or implemented some outcome-based approach to education while 11 others have made certain outcomes part of the state accreditation or assessment process.[10]

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[8]National Governors' Association, *Time for Results: The Governors' 1989 Report on Education* (Washington D.C.: National Governors' Association, 1986), 2.
[9]The Statement by the President and Governors, "A Jeffersonian Compact," *New York Times*, October 1, 1989.
[10]Education Commission of the States (ECS), *Outcomes Based Education: An Overview* (Denver: ECS, 1993), 2.

Many people, however, find outcome-based education attractive in name only. Beneath this innocuous-sounding name, they find outcomes that are nebulous and hard to measure and that focus on the affective (emotional) domain. Many outcomes deal with attitudes, values, beliefs and emotions rather than academic achievement.

Those opposing OBE come from quarters spanning the political spectrum,[11] and contrary to the popular claim, opponents are not "almost exclusively religious-right organizations."

An excerpt from an early draft of an education proposal in Pennsylvania illustrates the questionable outcomes:

Goal: Self Worth: All students understand and appreciate their worth as unique and capable individuals and exhibit self-esteem. All students act through a desire to succeed rather than a fear of failure while recognizing that failure is part of everyone's experiences.[12]

Goal: Arts and Humanities: All students advocate the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and traditions, including works of art, presentations and performances in the local and global community as a function of good citizenship.[13]

Goal: Wellness and Fitness: All students analyze community and environmental health problems and plan personal, family and community actions to reduce or eliminate hazardous situations.[14]

More on the Pennsylvania story later.

An alternative approach to education outcomes

There is an approach to outcome-based education that differs from the approach supported by the governors at the Education Summit. Identified most often with this alternative is William G. Spady, director of High Success Network, a national group of schools involved in outcome-based education. Spady and others began experimenting with OBE in the 1970s, although related ideas have been part of educational discussions and practice since the 1950s.

For Spady, exit outcomes are not only curriculum content. They are "the knowledge, competence, and orientations (our word for the affective and attitudinal dimensions of learning) that you deem critical for assuring success."[15] The outcomes "go far beyond the narrow subject-matter emphasis that characterizes most state testing and reform programs."[16]

Spady bases exit outcomes on his notion of what it takes to function successfully in the role of a consumer, producer, citizen, family member, intimate friend, or life-long learner. These roles and the

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[11]Mary Jane Smetanka, "Students Soon Will Work For Outcomes, Not Diplomas," *Star Tribune*, September 12, 1993, 19A.
[12]Independent Regulatory Review Commission, "State Board of Education School Profiles; Curriculum; Vocational-Technical Education," *Pennsylvania Bulletin, Part II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Fry Communications, Volume 21, Number 44, November 2, 1991), 5222.
[13]Ibid., 5232.
[14]Ibid., 5234.
[15]Ron Brandt, "On Outcome Based Education: A Conversation With Bill Spady," *Educational Leadership* 50 (December 1992/January 1993), 69.
[16]William G. Spady, "Organizing for Results: The Basis of Authentic Restructuring and Reform," *Educational Leadership* 46 (October 1988), 6.

outcomes supporting them are more encompassing than the discrete and focused capacities and abilities needed for reading, speaking, and computational skills.

"Transformational OBE" is Spady's term for exit outcomes. Transformational OBE expects students to "demonstrate those behaviors that denote a positive social, emotional, and physical well-being."[17] The vision of a graduate as a "competent future citizen" guides this approach, which begins with a detailed description of what the world will be like for students graduating from high school.

To develop exit outcomes, strategic design teams gather, critique, and synthesize the best information available about the life students are likely to face in the real world.

Spady provides the following as an example of future conditions design teams should describe and use to guide the development of exit outcomes.

Based upon an assessment of the future, we believe our students will face challenges and opportunities in a world characterized by:

- Worldwide economic competition and interdependence which creates ever- increasing requirements for job-related performance and a need to transcend language, cultural, national, and racial difference. . . .

- An increasing pluralization and polarization of social, cultural, political, and economic life that demands understanding and that requires innovative approaches to leadership, policymaking, resource distributions, and conflict resolution.[18]

The transformational approach strives for success for all students. Almost all children can learn, advocates say, given enough time and proper instructional approaches. Educators need only find "what works" for each student.

This approach has implications for the way schools organize themselves and for the way educators approach teaching, learning, and testing. It questions the "time-based" approach to education, which divides the year into semesters and days with uniform and specific class periods devoted to distinct subjects. Administering paper and pencil tests, which grade students on content mastery, becomes inadequate.

Under the transformational approach, therefore, educators work with children until they master the expected outcomes, and schools provide the opportunity to learn. Schools that continue to use letter grades often use A, B, or I (incomplete but in-progress). Others have only two grades—one indicates mastery and the other indicates not mastered yet. Spady says the transformational approach creates a "multiple opportunity system of instruction and evaluation . . . [that] undermine[s] the potential use of evaluation (testing and grades) as a mechanism for the control of student behavior."[19]

The transformational view contrasts with two other views on outcomes. Spady calls them the traditional and transitional.

The traditional approach makes outcomes too narrow and content specific. Rather than starting with a clear understanding of the life students will face, outcomes derive from existing curricula.

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[17]Cindy Horswell, "Critics Debate Outcomes Based Education Proposal," *Houston Chronicle*, August 30, 1992, 1C.
[18]William G. Spady and Kit J. Marshall, "Beyond Traditional Outcome Based Education," *Educational Leadership* 49 (October 1991), 71.
[19]William G. Spady, "Competency Based Education: A Bandwagon in Search of a Definition," *Educational Researcher* 6 (January 1977), 12.

Transitional OBE lies between the two, beginning with the general question of what the students must be like in order to be successful after graduation. The answers in transitional OBE, however, are not as specific as answers in transformational OBE.

The different views on OBE confuse the call for education reform. When talking about outcome-based education, are OBE supporters reflecting the governors' perspective? Or are they expounding a more expanded view of outcomes that Spady would call transformational OBE?

Because of these conflicting views, many state officials, regardless of political persuasion, have wrought political havoc in implementing OBE. A quick survey of four states tells the story.

Virginia

In Virginia, with approval of former Democratic Governor L. Douglas Wilder, the state Department of Education developed a plan called the "World Class Education Initiative." The plan included a Common Core of Learning proposal describing outcomes students should master. Joseph A. Spagnolo, Superintendent of Public Instruction, called the proposal "a statement of educational expectations for Virginia's public schools."[20] In November 1992, the department circulated draft copies of the proposal.

The proposal included 38 student outcomes categorized under seven "dimensions of living": personal well-being and accomplishment, interpersonal relationships, lifelong learning, cultural and creative endeavors, work and economic well-being, local and global civic participation, and environmental stewardship.

Local school boards and parent groups strongly opposed the plan. The school boards viewed it as an encroachment on their authority, and parents objected to what they saw as a focus on vaguely defined values at the expense of academics.

February 1993 saw the release of another draft of the Common Core proposal. This version called its approach "transformational outcome-based education" and included a slightly revised set of the seven life roles: fulfilled individual, supportive person, lifelong learner, expressive contributor, quality worker, informed citizen, and environmental steward.

In May 1993, after making more revisions, the Board of Education approved a draft of the proposal that listed 33 specific outcomes students needed to master by tenth grade. The outcomes came under six headings that combined Spady's life roles with references to values and traditional content: citizenship, the natural world, cultural and creative endeavors, responsibility, learning, and work. This proposal provoked even more controversy.

In September 1993, Governor Wilder ordered the Board of Education to withdraw the plan. He said the proposal "was introduced with the best of intentions . . . [but has] become tied to other fashionable approaches to curriculum reform. Make no mistake, I do not now, nor have I ever, endorsed changing Virginia's education standards to encompass values-based education. Knowledge and proficiency of basic skills must remain the basis for education in our Commonwealth."[21]

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[20]Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Education, Superintendent's Memo # 263 (December 18, 1992), 3.
[21]John F. Harris, "Wilder Abandons Curriculum Change," *Washington Post*, September 16, 1993, 1B; see also Maria Koklanaris and Laurie Kellman, "Wilder Quashes 'Feel Good' Education," *Washington Times*, September 16, 1993, 1A, 13A.

Washington

In 1991, former Democratic Governor Booth Gardner proposed that the Washington Legislature establish a Commission on Assessment to oversee creation of a new "high stakes" statewide testing program. The program would measure student mastery of statewide goals. Also in 1991, a statewide teachers strike led the governor to establish the Council on Education Reform and Funding. The juxtaposition of these events led the Legislature to refrain from acting on the governor's original commission proposal.

The 1991 proposal, however, was the basis for a new legislative proposal in 1992. The Legislature's proposal called for creation of a Commission on Student Learning that would craft a new statewide testing program to measure prescribed statewide outcomes. This proposal generated criticism from several groups. The most vocal opponents were those who objected to the "extremely vague" nature of the outcomes students were to master. This time, though, the Legislature did pass a proposal authorizing new statewide tests and a commission to develop them.

As Governor Gardner neared the end of his term, the Council on Education Reform and Funding, which he created in 1991, issued its report. The council proposed modifications to the 1992 law and encouraged the Legislature to appropriate a substantial amount of money to implement the law. Governor Gardner's Democratic successor, Mike Lowry, for the most part endorsed these proposals.

Controversy again erupted from those critical of the general "outcome-based approach" to education and from those objecting to the specific (if extraordinarily vague and dangerously moldable) goal of students become "caring and responsible citizens."

The controversy led the Legislature to make several changes in the council's original proposal. The Legislature deleted the goal of "caring and responsible citizens" and made implementation of the Performance Based Education Act of 1993 optional until the year 2000, leaving it to local school boards to decide which schools would participate prior to that time. The state would not require statewide implementation of the assessment until 2000.

Opponents did not accept this approach. They organized a statewide group called Reform for Effective Public Education and Academic Learning (REPEAL). The group's leader, Jeb Brown, led a voter signature drive to place the act for repeal on the November 1993 ballot. Although Brown and his followers failed to gather enough signatures, they promised to continue their opposition.[22]

Ohio

In 1992, Ohio Republican Gov. George Voinovich signed legislation creating a statewide Education and Goals Commission. The act established a Learning and Outcomes Panel to which the governor appointed 57 members.

The panel developed 11 broad learner goals and 24 more specific learner outcomes for students to achieve before graduating from high school. The plan included two particularly controversial learner outcomes: "Ohio graduates will . . . function as a responsible family member . . . [and they will] maintain physical, emotional, and social well-being."[23]

The proposal caused an uproar directed at the "values and attitudes" some saw as part of the plan. Richard Chalini, a parent who teaches in Cleveland, offered a good summary of what many parents

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[22]Joanna Richardson, "Scaled back Reform Measures Advance in Washington State," *Education Week*, March 3, 1993; Robert Butts, "Summary of Washington's Education Reform Legislation" (available through Washington State House Education Committee, October 26, 1993).

[23]Barbara Monteith, "OBE: A Review for Beginners," *The Eagle*, 1993, 1.

saw as the problem: "My concern is these psychological goals take the rights from parents and students."[24]

In June 1993, the Ohio House Education Committee voted unanimously to delete an OBE provision included in an education reform measure that was part of the state's budget bill. Rep. Ronald V. Gerberry, a Democrat chairing the Education Committee and an active member of the Ohio Education Association, felt compelled to protect his reputation by defending his action and saying, "I am not the Jesse Helms of Ohio. We have to be responsive to our constituents."[25] State Education Superintendent Ted Sanders looked for the silver lining in the debate when he lamented, "We must be doing something right to spark a debate like this."[26]

Iowa

In Iowa the move to an outcomes approach began in 1990. Although others were involved, it was primarily business and education leaders who began the conversation about how to make their schools "world class." All agreed that a key element of this effort was to focus on results.

In February 1992, a 170-member steering committee began deciding what outcomes they would expect of Iowa students. In July, after consulting with more than 600 reviewers, the committee identified nine broad outcomes: lifelong learning, problem solving, communication, group membership, commitments to quality, creativity, diversity, environmental responsibility, and life management.

This effort produced a large public outcry. Critics challenged the diversity, environmental responsibility, and life management outcomes as an attempt to impose "politically correct" values in the curriculum.

This dispute led State Superintendent of Education William Lepley in May 1993 to shelve his OBE plan. Instead, the Department of Education would help districts set their own outcomes. Lepley commented, "We didn't drop it. We merely withdrew it to revise our strategy."[27]

Other states as diverse as Minnesota, Colorado, Kansas, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming are having similar experiences.

Today, outcome-based education is a "catch all" phrase describing a good idea gone wrong. A more detailed examination of what has transpired in first Pennsylvania, and then particularly in Minnesota will illustrate how "the Devil is in the details" when the subject is outcome-based education.

The Pennsylvania Experience

Context. Nowhere has the battle over OBE raged more intensely than in Pennsylvania, the first state to mandate as state policy an OBE framework with specific outcomes. And in no state have OBE opponents, especially parents, been more successful.

In the fall of 1989, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education began a three-year process that culminated in March 1992 with the board mandating that the state establish an outcome-based approach to education. This mandate included a proposal to replace traditional Carnegie units, which set hourly requirements for the amount of time a student spends in a classroom on a given subject, with student

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[24]"Outcome Based Education: Ohio Parents Unhappy With Proposal," *Daily Report Card* (Falls Church, VA: American Political Network, April 22, 1993).
[25]James A. Barnes, "Parent Power," *National Journal*, June 12, 1993, 1400.
[26]Bill Zlatos, "Outcome Based Outrage," *The Executive Educator*, September 1993, 12.
[27]Ibid., 13.

mastery-of-learning outcomes. Supporters of the mandate included Democratic Gov. Robert P. Casey, most major education and business groups, and other civic and advocacy groups.

Proposal. The Board of Education released the first draft of the proposal to the public in November 1991. The draft contained 15 Common Core Goals of Learning and 575 outcomes --127 graduation outcomes for kindergarten through twelfth grade and 448 benchmark outcomes for grades three, six, and nine. The outcomes covered traditional academic areas such as mathematics, science, the arts, and the humanities, but the outcomes also dealt with more general issues such as self-worth, appreciating and understanding others, and personal, family, and community living.

The following are two examples of more general outcomes from "Appreciating and Understanding Others":

- **Common Core Goal: Appreciating and Understanding Others:** Each student shall gain knowledge of and have exposure to different cultures and lifestyles in order to foster an appreciation of the dignity, worth, contributions and equal rights of all people.

- **Graduation Outcome V for K-12:** All students demonstrate the ability to interact with others on the basis of their individual merits and without discrimination because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, lifestyle, or socioeconomic status.[28]

These "outcomes" are not cognitive outcomes. They are largely in the general skill and affective domains. Further, they describe attitudes, dispositions, and sentiments.

Obvious questions arise. How will students gain knowledge of and exposure to different lifestyles? How will educators measure a student's ability to interact with others? On a more fundamental level, how can a state order a public school to require all students to know about and be exposed to matters such as different lifestyles?

Public Reaction. A major outcry arose across the state. OBE opponents believed that the state -- acting through its public schools -- was intruding into the private lives of students and families. Opponents contended that the state had no business mandating these types of outcomes for students.

Further, opponents believed that the proposed performance-based assessment system -- a system that could include computerized electronic portfolios -- could gather and store too much personal information. The proposal to make the system available to potential employers invaded the privacy of students and their families. OBE opposition leader Nancy Stabile, Director of the Pennsylvania chapter of Citizens for Excellence in Education, commented, "The state is now saying it will mandate to individual children what they must . . . be like."[29]

Peg Luksic, leader of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Academic Excellence, said, "The government bureaucracy at every level is trying to expand its authority. . . . Our questions are really kind of fundamental. What is the mission of public education, and who has control?"[30]

Democratic State Representative Peter Daly said, "This is truly a war. Now is the time, and this is the place. No one has a right to treat my child or your child as a guinea pig."[31]

After much public pressure and months of controversy, Governor Casey, in his January 1993 State of the Commonwealth address, said, "The regulations contain language mired in confusion and controversy, which jeopardizes the public support that is essential for the ultimate success of the [OBE]

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[28]Independent Regulatory Review Commission, 5230.
[29]Harp, 19.
[30]Harp, 20.
[31]*Daily Report Card*, November 18, 1992.

reform."[32] While not withdrawing his support of the state board's OBE proposal, the governor sought a way out of the conflict. An eventual compromise eliminated the most controversial section of outcomes in "Appreciating and Understanding Others."

Role of the Legislature. One tactic OBE opponents used to try to defeat the proposal was to try to persuade their legislators to take control of the issue away from the Board of Education. The opponents were successful in getting the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to vote twice on the OBE issue.

In April 1992, by a 150 to 47 vote, the House passed a resolution urging the state's Independent Regulatory Review Committee (IRRC) to delay approval of the OBE regulations, pending an investigation by a special legislative committee. Nearly one year later, in February 1993, the House passed a resolution by a 139 to 61 vote to nullify and overturn the Department of Education's OBE plan. The state Senate, however, allowed the OBE plan to move forward and refused to consider the House bill that would derail it.

The Board of Education approved the final version of the OBE plan, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission voted in May 1993 to publish the OBE regulations.

Final Proposal. The approved version presents a list of eight character traits and qualities -- Spady's life roles -- public schools should prepare all students to have and to be: high academic achievers; self-directed, lifelong learners; responsible, involved citizens; collaborative, high-quality contributors to the economic and cultural life of their communities; adaptive users of advanced technologies; concerned stewards of the global environment; healthy, continuously developing individuals; and caring, supportive family and community members.[33]

In addition, the plan has 53 student learning outcomes required for graduation from high school which deal with "academic" areas of mathematics, arts and humanities, citizenship, communications, wellness and fitness, environment and ecology, science and technology, home economics, and career education and work. The testing in these areas will focus initially on mathematics, reading, and writing composition, but emphasis on science, social studies, and the arts will follow. Each school district can add additional outcomes and must develop a school district assessment plan to measure all nine academic areas.

The plan also has six common core goals (as opposed to character traits and qualities): self-worth; information and thinking skills; learning independently and collaboratively; adaptability to change; ethical judgment; and honesty, responsibility, and tolerance. The state will not test students on these common core goals.

In September 1993, the state began a three-year implementation plan for the school districts. Each district is responsible for developing its own "strategic plan" and for deciding at what pace they will undertake changes.

The first set of plans from one third of the districts is due in September 1994. Members of the class of 1999 are in this first group of students who must demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. Another third of the districts must submit their plans by 1995, which will affect students in the class of 2000. The final third of the districts will submit their plans by 1996, which will cover students in the class of 2001.

Neither proponents nor opponents of the OBE proposal are satisfied with the final version. Francine D'Alonzo, from the Pennsylvania Coalition for Academic Excellence, said, "Anyone can look at the

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[32] *Daily Report Card*, January 27, 1993.

[33] "State Board of Education Curriculum," Independent Regulatory Review Commission, Pennsylvania Bulletin, Part II (Mechanicsburg, PA: Fry Communications, Volume 23, Number 30, July 24, 1993), 3552.

revised version and see they are just shuffling the words."[34] Rita Adessa, from the Philadelphia Gay and Lesbian Task Force, commented, "Removing 'appreciating others' as an academic goal subject to testing . . . makes this a voluntary effort, and what that means is that nothing will change. If school districts are not required to develop and teach multicultural education, they will not."[35]

One unidentified OBE opponent probably best summarized the situation by saying, "You haven't seen anything yet."[36]

The Minnesota Experience

Context. The Minnesota OBE story is interesting for two reasons. First, nowhere has there been a longer and more concerted effort to establish an outcome-based approach to student learning than in Minnesota. The effort took root in the 1970s and continues to this day.

Second, support for the effort came from political, education, civic, and business leaders. Support from the political realm began in the early 1980s and involved governors in two administrations, one Democratic and one Republican. State support came from Gov. Rudy Perpich's and Gov. Arne Carlson's appointed commissioners of education, the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the four education committee chairpersons in both houses of the Legislature. Although some legislators opposed an outcome-based approach, there was no broad-based uprising as there was in the Pennsylvania House.

Laying the Groundwork. In 1971, the Minnesota Department of Education started the Minnesota Educational Assessment Program, a survey that would provide information on students in general and also on certain subgroups of students.[37] The survey would not collect individual student data; therefore, state officials would not be able to make individual comparisons.

The following year, 1972, the department began developing "Some Essential Learner Outcomes" (SELOs) which specified the content matter that teachers would teach. Through the years, the department's collection of outcomes grew, as different subjects and grades became areas for surveying and testing.

In 1976, the Legislature enacted a Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting (PER) law that had a "result-oriented" aim. The law required districts to create written plans setting district goals, strategies for achieving them, and procedures for evaluating and reporting on progress toward the goals. The law also required instructional objectives to be in the plans. To support their work in developing the instructional objectives, the department began an expanded effort to identify learner outcomes.

In 1983, Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Gov. Rudy Perpich appointed Ruth Randall to be the Commissioner of Education. One of her first tasks was to prepare an education report as requested by the Legislature during the 1983 session. The new commissioner issued her report in October 1993 -- during the national education debate engendered by the April 1983 report "A Nation at Risk." Randall set forth both general and, for that time, radical proposals.

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[34] *Daily Report Card*, April 16, 1993.
[35] Ibid.
[36] *Education Week*, April 22, 1992, 27.
[37] The following sources have been consulted to develop a history of OBE in Minnesota: Wayne Erickson, Gilbert Valdez, and William McMillan, *Outcome Based Education in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Education, 1990); Nancy Livingston, Debra O'Connor, and Linda Owen, "Learning A New Way: A Four Part Special on OBE," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 1992; Meg Mannix and Dennis Shapiro, "Outcome Based Escalation," *Jola Education Monthly*, October 1993; Tim Mazzoni, Carol Freeman, and Dan Stewart, with the assistance of Eric Campbell, "State Policymaking and Outcome Based Education: A Minnesota Case Study," (unpublished paper, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, December 1992).

First, she wanted to change the graduation rule by replacing traditional "seat time" graduation standards with "measurable learner outcomes." Second, she urged the Legislature to create state achievement tests that could determine whether individual students had learned the "outcomes."

The commissioner believed that in order to have information adequate for accountability purposes, they would need data on the individual students and not just on a sample population.

The commissioner also recommended developing learner outcomes to promote "higher level thinking skills." This would involve the department in creating model outcomes and giving individual districts the option of developing their own outcomes if they were more rigorous than the department's.

The Legislature was not entirely satisfied with the commissioner's report. The legislators considered the report vague and unresponsive. They held several hearings but took little action.

In 1984, the business community entered the discussion. The Minnesota Business Partnership, made up of the CEOs of the state's approximately 100 largest businesses, produced a report, "The Minnesota Plan," that called for a major reorganization of kindergarten through twelfth grade education. The plan included a recommendation that all students master "common core competencies" and that the state develop uniform achievement tests to measure whether students attained those competencies. Both proposals appeared to be an endorsement of Commissioner Randall's earlier suggestions.

The following year, Governor Perpich entered the discussion by proposing an "Access to Excellence" plan. The governor's plan called for legislation authorizing the department to develop "a model Minnesota outcome-based learner system." This was the first use of the phrase "outcome-based learner system" in a state policy proposal. This system was to include a learner plan for each student along with an assessment feedback process. All this was consistent with the earlier proposals of Commissioner Randall and the Minnesota Business Partnership.

Governor Perpich's proposals on the outcome-based learner system received little attention from the Legislature, for the Legislature focused on another, more volatile proposal by the governor -- a public-school open-enrollment choice proposal. Ultimately, the Legislature's education package did allow the Department of Education to maintain a collection of "model learner expectations" in the core curriculum at all grade levels for voluntary use by districts, along with the test items to measure them.

The next major force to enter the push for an outcomes approach was the Board of Education. In March 1986, the board adopted eight strategic goals. Goal Three proposed to "develop a performance-based education system, including personalized learning plans, in 10 to 15 demonstration sites."

The first formal step to require statewide outcomes for students came in 1987 as an outgrowth of the board's third goal. The Legislature amended the PER law and directed the board to develop a set of "essential learner outcomes" for subject areas. These cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes were to be limited in number, and the board was to adopt the outcomes and make them mandatory for local districts. Early in 1988, the board adopted a set of them.

Spady Approach Dominates. The 1988 legislative session saw the creation of a Task Force on Education Organization. The majority of task force members were non-legislators representing education groups, and their tasks included investigating the notion of learner outcomes and assessment. During deliberations in early 1989, the task force invited William Spady to address its members. Spady reinforced and encouraged the direction of both the board and the department and gave their effort new impetus. In fact, the outcomes system described in a draft document a few months later follows the Spady approach.

OBE opponent Rep. Gene Pelowski, DFL-Winona, saw Spady's visit as a defining moment for the outcomes effort in the state: "This whole [OBE] thing came from the top down because a paid consultant came to Minnesota in 1989, did his dog and pony show, got paid good money, and then he left. And we are left holding the bag."[38]

Expanding the Effort. In May 1989, through the cooperative efforts of Governor Perpich, the Legislature, and the state Board of Education, the state appropriated $1 million to finance up to 10 sites to test the outcomes system. The board would select two-year research projects that would receive $100,000 grants. The department's new, semi-autonomous Office of Educational Leadership would provide assistance to the winners.

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), at the University of Minnesota, received a separate grant from the Office of Educational Leadership to evaluate the projects. The center would not collect outcome data, however, because many believed it would take several more years -- perhaps as many as six years -- to see any major improvement in student learning. By October 1989, the board had reviewed the 80 applications and had chosen 10 sites comprising 17 districts and five educational consortiums.

During 1990, the department prepared a new outcome-based graduation rule, containing 15 graduation outcomes, for the board to review. In October 1990, the board and the new Commissioner of Education, Tom Nelson, demonstrated their support for OBE. Meeting in Rochester, the board unanimously approved a proposal to exempt the Rochester district from several state requirements in four areas.

First, the waivers allowed student schedules to vary; students could spend longer periods studying some subjects or could attend school for less time on one day than on another day.

Second, Rochester could develop local graduation outcomes to replace state course requirements. In exchange for this, officials agreed to measure student achievement using standardized tests and issue achievement reports annually for five years.

Third, the district could allow teachers using team teaching to teach subjects for which they were not licensed. This would provide more flexibility in scheduling.

Fourth, the district could develop staff training programs for middle school educators that would meet local needs rather than state requirements.

In approving the Rochester request, Tom Lindquist, state board president, made clear the significance of the board's action: "We have encouraged Rochester and other school districts to move in this direction. The board and department have chosen outcome-based education as the main road to accountability and high performance in Minnesota schools."[39]

In December 1990, the department launched the "Challenge 2000: Success for All Learners" program, designed to be the "banner of a comprehensive state education plan."[40] A key element was a "comprehensive system of outcome based education" in all Minnesota schools.[41] Among other things, this program would do the following:

- Develop varied and flexible interdisciplinary and cooperative instructional strategies that address the diversity of individual student learning needs.

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[38]Livingston, et al., 8.
[39]Minnesota Department of Education, *Education Update* (November 1990), 1.
[40]Minnesota Department of Education, *Challenge 2000: Success for All Learners* (St. Paul, MN: Department of Education, December 1990), 2.
[41]Ibid., 3.

• Promote responsible citizenship through experiential learning opportunities in all neighborhoods and communities in Minnesota.[42]

Continuing the Move to OBE. Several 1991 events continued the move to outcome-based education. Newly elected Independent Republican Governor Arne Carlson took office, as did his appointed Commissioner of Education, Gene Mammenga, a member of the Minnesota state Senate from 1966 to 1972, and a lobbyist for the Minnesota Education Association. Both the governor and the commissioner were committed to a change in the graduation rule by better focusing on outcomes.

The Legislature was extremely active on the education front, especially on the OBE issue. While refusing to continue support for the Task Force on Education Organization and the Office of Educational Leadership, the Legislature adopted a mission statement for Minnesota public education and a statutory definition of outcome-based education:

Mission statement: The mission of public education in Minnesota, a system for life-long learning, is to ensure individual academic achievement, an informed citizenry, and a highly productive work force. This system focuses on the learner, promotes and values diversity, provides participatory decision-making, ensures accountability, models democratic principles, creates and sustains a climate for change, provides personalized learning environments, encourages learners to reach their maximum potential, and integrates and coordinates human services for learners.[43]

Statutory definition: Outcome-Based Education is a pupil-centered, results-oriented system premised on the belief that all individuals can learn. In this system: What a pupil is to learn is clearly identified; each pupil's progress is based on the pupil's demonstrated achievement; each pupil's needs are accommodated through multiple instructional strategies and assessment tools; and each pupil is provided time and assistance to realize her or his potential.[44]

Supporters pointed out that neither statement requires a particular teaching method, grading system, or schedule procedure. For them, OBE was not a state-mandated "delivery system" but was instead a set of expected outcomes. Opponents countered that the viewpoint implicit in them mirrored the position held by Spady, who advocates specific approaches to these and other issues.

The Legislature appropriated funds to support a competitive grants program for districts implementing OBE. The department received 188 proposals, from which they chose 30. Each site received $40,000 over two years, with the district paying the third year dissemination costs.

The Legislature also passed the nation's first charter school law, which created up to eight outcome-based schools. Building on the Rochester experience, charter schools would be free of many state and local rules in exchange for students' achieving the required outcomes.

In mid-1991, the Board of Education gave preliminary approval to the "Outcome-Based Graduation Rule." The rule recommended individual student learning and graduation plans and a state-developed assessment measuring three levels of achievement -- adept, advanced, and exemplary. On a regular basis, the state commissioner would receive a required comprehensive district plan for "verification of learner achievement of graduation outcomes." Several items were to be part of the plan, including an information management system for student and district records.

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[42]Ibid., 3.
[43]Minnesota Department of Education, *Outcome Based Education in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Department of Education, 1992), 10.
[44]Ibid., 3.

The rule also listed seven graduation outcomes describing the general characteristics graduates should demonstrate prior to graduation. These seven outcomes came from the 15 found in the department's 1990 draft. The outcomes correspond with 63 competencies that "further define the knowledge, skills, and attitudes"[45] that students must master for graduation. The section on graduation outcomes states that "[i]n order to lead productive fulfilling lives in a complex and changing society and to continue learning: [T]he graduate demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes" needed to do the following:

- Communicate with words, numbers, visuals, symbols and sounds.
- Think and solve problems to meet personal, social and academic needs.
- Contribute as a citizen in local, state, national and global communities.
- Understand diversity and the interdependence of people.
- Work cooperatively in groups and independently.
- Develop physical and emotional well-being.
- And contribute to the economic well-being of society.[46]

Early Objections and Responses. Although no broad-based, statewide and organized opposition to outcome-based education was visible yet, storm clouds were gathering as people met in 23 public meetings across the state following publication of this draft of the rule.

Generally, the objections raised in the meetings were that the board was ready to mandate a new education trend which was costly to implement, mostly unproven, and hard to explain in plain English. More specifically, there were protests about outcomes and competencies dealing with values, feelings, and attitudes. For example, competency one of outcome six calls for a graduate "to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to . . . emotional well-being and . . . describe the importance of and strategies for enhancing self-esteem."

But these objections did not stop the OBE train. Rather, they prompted the board to provide the department with new guidance for a second draft of the graduation rule. There were five elements in the board's new directive.

First, the board recommended removing the word "attitudes" from the phrase "knowledge, skills, and attitudes" introducing the seven outcomes each student was supposed to demonstrate prior to graduation. According to Joan Wallin of the Department of Education, this was done "in response to concerns raised at the meetings about the perception of needing the correct attitude to graduate."[47]

Second, the department was to greatly reduce in number the 63 competencies and then word the remaining competencies more clearly.

Third, the districts would have a diminished role in establishing graduation requirements. This would occur by including in the graduation rule "criterion-referenced statewide standards for at least four fundamental skills, including reading, writing, mathematical processes, and problem solving."[48] Statewide standards would make OBE implementation less costly, because much duplication of effort would be eliminated.

Fourth, except where required by law, individual student learning plans would be a local option rather than a statewide mandate. And the department should eliminate the three student performance levels (adept, advanced, and exemplary), thereby avoiding anything that "would result in tracking and would lead to discriminatory practices for some students."[49]

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[45]Minnesota Department of Education, *Education Update* (March 1991), 1.
[46]Ibid..
[47]Minnesota Department of Education, *Education Update* (March 1992), 2.
[48]Ibid., 3.
[49]Ibid., 8.

Finally, the new draft was to stress the distinction between the competency-based graduation rule and the implementing of outcome-based education. State board chairman Tom Lindquist said, "Many people think the State Board is proposing to mandate outcome-based education in every public school by a certain time. To the contrary, . . . it . . . [is not] proposing . . . to mandate any particular form of instruction in the classroom."[50]

The objections raised at the public meetings and the resulting board revisions may have slowed the move to OBE, but again they did not derail the train.

During 1992, the Legislature reiterated its commitment to "a rigorous, results-oriented graduation rule" and required the board to "adopt a statewide, results-oriented Graduation Rule to be implemented starting with students in 1996."[51]

However, the Legislature sensed that more than a few constituents were questioning OBE. The legislators held two days of hearings in mid-January and then decided to review the graduation rule before it became law. To accomplish this, the legislators ordered the Department of Education to present a progress report to legislators by February 1993 and present a final report by January 1994.

The Legislature prohibited the board from prescribing "the delivery system, form of instruction, or a single statewide form of assessment that local sites must use to meet" the graduation rule requirements. But unless the Legislature voted to stop the board, the board's OBE direction and timetable would continue.

In November 1992, the Department of Education published the second version of the graduation rule, which was revised to meet the objections raised at the community meetings. A curious feature of this draft is that it drops all references to an "Outcome-Based Graduation Rule." Instead, the draft proposes "Results-Oriented Graduation Standards" and a core set of graduation outcomes.

There are five exit outcomes (the renamed graduation outcomes from the first draft) that "provide a picture of the whole learner" and propose that a Minnesota graduate perform as a constructive thinker; self-directed learner; effective communicator; collaborative producer; and as a community contributor.[52]

Notice that the list eliminates references not only to attitudes but also to knowledge and skills.

Content outcomes, a second category of outcomes, describes "essential concepts, principles, and processes learners need to make sense of new information and complex situations."[53] Although not strictly tied to subject areas, the draft proposed statewide requirements for reading, writing, and mathematical processes. Furthermore, elective content outcomes would comprise at least 25 percent of the total content outcomes. A state-level citizen panel would develop the outcomes using a public process described in the draft document.

This second draft of the rule provided more details on student assessment than the first draft did. Leaving primary responsibility to local districts, the second draft described a state role of developing and distributing models that districts could use. The state would have responsibility for coordination, quality control, and verifying results from local testing.

Draft two urged institutions of higher education and businesses to set admission and employment standards reflecting the statewide outcomes, and the draft strongly endorsed a performance approach to testing. In the interim, "[c]urrent course and letter grade reporting, which is unidimensional, will

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[50]Ibid., 2.
[51]Mannix and Shapiro, 3.
[52]Minnesota Department of Education, *Education Update* (November 1992), 2.
[53]Ibid., 2.

continue on a parallel path with performance standards until the community and higher education deem it unnecessary."[54]

Opposition Grows. The second draft sparked public hearings at eight sites in November and December 1992 and produced a stronger and more organized opposition, especially from grass-roots groups of parents concerned about exit outcomes describing values and attitudes. One controversial outcome was exit outcome five, which stated that "a Minnesota graduate performs as: A community contributor who appreciates and understands diversity. . . ." What, the opponents asked, does this outcome mean? How will teachers teach it? How will teachers measure it?

Linda McKeen, a Lakeville resident and co-founder of Parent Education Network (PEN), was one of the parents concerned about the outcomes approach. Though not necessarily opposed to OBE, McKeen is concerned about the way schools use it. She saw "no proof in the current movement that children are learning more or behaving better."[55] Furthermore, she feared that "[w]hen all children need to meet the same standards, [they would be likely to] end up with equal education, not equal opportunity. We're focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths . . . aiming low."[56]

McKeen and her followers advocate a return to academic achievement based on, but not limited to, basic academic curricula that educators can describe and measure objectively: phonetic reading skills; reading comprehension using broad selections of classical literature; writing skills based on proper grammatical usage; basic arithmetic skills with an emphasis on mental and written computation, including memorization; geography, beginning with the United States; history, including ancient and Western civilizations, principles of the American Constitution, and world history; and economics, including benefits of the free-market system. Further options might be foreign languages, computer literacy, fine arts, physical education, and good health habits.[57]

Georgianne Ginder, a parent in Apple Valley, began meeting with other parents in 1992. In 1993 a group of them formed Taxpayers for Excellent Academics in Minnesota (TEAM). Georgianne, who had taught school in Iowa, Ohio, and Maryland, commented, "I don't want kids experimented on while teachers try to figure out what's going on. I'm concerned about teachers being overwhelmed, and concerned about experimentation."[58] She continued, "Everybody's wondering how to do this, just wading in and trying this and that. [Schools have] a cavalier attitude that if it doesn't work, we'll try something else."[59]

Ginder finds it surprising and frightening that many of her supporters prefer anonymity. "When [people are] afraid to give their names, something is wrong," she said. People are being labeled . . . and taking sides. When people are polarized [over an issue like this], learning doesn't happen."[60]

Althea and Paul Larson, from Eden Prairie, began the Citizens Alliance for Responsibility in Education (CARE). Paul, who ran unsuccessfully for a local school board seat (on an anti-OBE platform), believes that education is being "deliberately dumbed-down" by OBE, and he recounted how his elementary-age boys had lost their motivation to study.[61] Althea said, "[OBE] sounds so wonderful, but it turned out not to be good for our family."[62]

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[54]Ibid., 3.
[55]"Strong Academics: What We Need," *Parents Education Newsletter* (Apple Valley, MN, November 1993), 3.
[56]Smetanka, 18A.
[57]"Strong Academics," 3.
[58]Smetanka, 1A.
[59]Ibid., 18A.
[60]Mannix and Shapiro, 3.
[61]Smetanka, 18A.
[62]Debra O'Connor, "Parents Challenge Education Changes," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 23, 1993, 6A.

Another reason Paul offered for opposing OBE was that it is "a whole new social agenda which is extraordinarily contrary to some of our beliefs. It used to be that education was reading, writing, and arithmetic. Now it's moral relativism."[63]

These parents fight the attempt to label them as Christian fundamentalists. "I am not the radical right," Linda McKeen said, "and I do not want that linked to this. People use that to immobilize the opposition."[64]

In fact, the Larsons' core group of five members included two conservative "Bible-believing Church members," a Catholic, an atheist, and a member of a Protestant mainline church. "We've been accused of being extremists and fundamentalists, but nothing would be further from the truth," Larson said.[65]

Evaluating OBE. The University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement released an interim report in January 1991 on their evaluation of the 10, two-year OBE project sites. While pointing to factors positively affecting the projects, the evaluation also identified problems limiting project success. One problem was that school personnel and community leaders lacked an adequate understanding of OBE. Second, personnel at the sites saw OBE as one of several priorities on which they were working. Third, personnel perceived OBE as a "top down" program driven by the state bureaucracy with no long-term commitment beyond the project term. The center's final report, issued in June 1991, did not alter the initial findings, especially the finding that educators felt OBE was just another "top down" bureaucratic fad.

In January 1993, Zimmer and Associates, of Eden Prairie, completed a separate evaluation of the 30 programs that received 1991 OBE grants. The Zimmer report did not draw comparative conclusions. The report found that whereas all programs were committed to OBE's philosophical tenets, such as that all children can learn, "[t]here is lack of agreement on what OBE means and requires . . . and differences in the way districts actually define OBE."[66]

Both the Zimmer report and the university's report focused more on processes and attitudes than on presenting evidence that students were learning more. This reinforced opponents' opinion that OBE was another confused educational fad based on unproven claims and imposed top down by bureaucrats.

Pushing Ahead. In May 1993, the board and the department published draft three of the graduation rule, which contained six comprehensive outcomes (the name changed again) and 13 content outcomes. The comprehensive outcomes state that a Minnesota graduate can do the following: think purposefully; direct own learning; communicate effectively; work productively with others; act responsibly as a citizen; and make lifework decisions.

Further, the third draft recommended developing by August 1994 content outcomes in reading, writing, and mathematics.

After the release of the third draft, the board began developing the content outcomes. The board produced 110 outcomes, which a 10-member committee later reduced to 25.

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[63]Smetanka, 18A.
[64]Ibid., 18A.
[65]Ibid., 16A.
[66]Zimmer and Associates, OBE Program Evaluation, Report to the Department of Education, St. Paul, Minnesota, January 19, 1993 (St. Paul, MN: Department of Education, 1993), 1E. The two other evaluations just cited: Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), Volume I: Phase I Evaluation Report, Report to Office of Educational Leadership, St. Paul, MN, January 1991 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1991); also by CAREI: Phase II Evaluation Report, June 1991.

The 1993 Legislature reaffirmed the outcome-based graduation rule, linking repeal of long-standing school regulations with the rule's implementation. The Legislature also allocated $10.3 million -- exceeding the governor's request -- over two years for 13 districts to develop and experiment with new tests and to train staff to implement the proposed rule. The new tests would develop performance assessments -- experiments, exhibits, demonstrations, and writing portfolios -- rather than multiple-choice tests. Each district would develop assessments for the six comprehensive outcomes. The 25 content outcomes would be divided among the districts.

Mixed Messages. Governor Carlson reentered the picture. Impatient with what he regarded as slow implementation of outcome-based reforms, he fired his appointee, Education Commissioner Mammenga, and the commissioner's two top aides.

In firing the commissioner and the two aides, Governor Carlson sent a clear message to Department of Education personnel: "They are being told in no uncertain terms that the train is leaving the station. . . . [G]et on the [OBE] train or look for another job."[67]

Carlson replaced Mammenga with Linda Powell, a district superintendent from Robbinsdale, which was one of the state's first OBE pilot project sites. Acting as "something of a new Jersey 'street fighter,' a woman who will get in your face if necessary,"[68] the new commissioner projected a twofold message to the state. She would remove department employees who did not support the reforms advocated by the governor and the Legislature. But she also said, "I know there's a backlash against OBE, but . . . I am not in any way supporting any agenda that looks at mandating values or social engineering."[69]

About one month later, the governor seemed to reverse himself. He told the Board of Education he would support the delaying of OBE implementation if that was necessary to gain more widespread acceptance. The "Carlson sermon to the Board" focused on three issues. First, the governor wanted the board to drop "soft" content outcomes such as "Understands the integration of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness." Second, the governor urged teachers not to hold back gifted students. Third, he hoped that school districts would keep the traditional A through F grading system rather than using a system where students do not fail.[70]

A few days after his "sermon" and while visiting students, the governor renamed OBE and called it "learning for success." "Sometimes changing names does help," he said.[71]

The governor's comments confused many people. But his comments pleased OBE critics, who saw their long-held position vindicated. State Senator Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, co-chair of the Senate Education Committee and an OBE supporter, was quick to criticize the governor: "What we need is a governor who is going to lead here, not a governor who is going to put his finger up to the wind every time he hears criticism."[72]

DFL Rep. Gene Pelowski, a key OBE opponent, was pleased with the governor's comments and said, "My assumption is that the parents are being listened to." Representative Pelowski pressed state officials to tell him what OBE would do to the state budget. "We should not proceed until we

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[67]James Walsh and Dane Smith, "Education Chief Replaced," *Star Tribune*, August 14, 1993, 14A.
[68]Rob Hatakainen, "New Chief of Education Has 'Can Do' Reputation," *Star Tribune*, September 7, 1993, 1A.
[69]Ibid., 12A.
[70]Debra O'Connor and Linda Owen, "Carlson Stirs Up OBE Debate," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 15, 1993, 1B; see also Robert Whereatt, "Carlson Changing Pace, Urges Caution on Teaching Overhaul," *Star Tribune*, September 14, 1993. 1, 5B; Nancy Livingston, "Carlson Challenges OBE Goals," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 14, 1993, 1, 4C.
[71]Robert Whereatt, "Will New School Funding Format Make the Grade?" *Star Tribune*, September 15, 1993, 2B.
[72]O'Connor and Owen, 10B.

understand what we're doing. Right now, it's almost impossible to cost out. It seems to be a bottomless pit."[73]

Sliv Carlson, Director of Government Relations for the Department of Education, interpreted the governor's comments differently. "What the governor is saying is he wants us to narrow the focus and put more of an emphasis at this time on the academic and measurable standards. He was getting the discussion on the table and seeing where the consensus is."[74]

Latest Proposal. In December 1993, the department circulated another draft of the graduation rule. The draft began by listing six comprehensive learning goals summarizing the mission of the public school. The goals also described qualities students should demonstrate as adults: purposeful thinkers; effective communicators; self-directed learners; productive group participants; responsible citizens; and life-work decision makers.

A second section, the "Minnesota Requirements," stated as follows: "[G]raduates must be well-prepared in knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to post-high school life and learning. Therefore, in order to receive a diploma from a Minnesota public high school, students must have demonstrated competence at or beyond the Required Level of Achievement" in:

- Reading to understand print media, consumer information, and literature of various types.
- Writing to communicate effective business, academic, and personal messages.
- Mathematics to solve problems in the language of numbers, shapes, space, and symbols commonly used in adult life.
- Scientific processes to interact effectively with the physical and biological worlds.
- Processes for interacting with government and community.
- Principles of physical health and wellness.
- And fundamental concepts of geography.

A student would have to meet the required level of achievement in these areas, which would be set on a statewide basis, in order to receive a diploma.

A Profile of Learning, in part three, described 13 competencies for a Minnesota graduate:

- Comprehends, interprets, and evaluates information received through reading, listening, and viewing.
- Uses strategies to understand and apply information from technical reading, such as manuals and research documents.
- Writes and speaks clearly for academic, technical, and personal purposes with a variety of audiences.
- Analyzes patterns and functional relationships in order to solve problems and determine cause/effect relationships.
- Applies data handling and measurement techniques to solve problems and justify conclusions.
- Applies methods of inquiry needed to conduct research, draw conclusions, and communicate and apply findings.
- Understands the past and continuous development of societies and cultures in human history.
- Understands how principles of interaction and interdependence affect physical and social situations.
- Applies informed decision-making processes to promote healthy lifestyles, social well-being, and stewardship of the environment.
- Understands the processes and meaning of artistic expression.
- Understands application of technological systems.

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[73]Ibid., 10B.
[74]Ibid., 10B.

- Understands the effective management of resources in a household, business, community, and government.
- And communicates using a language other than English.

Students would receive a rating profile showing how well they achieved the competencies. Early graduation could occur if students received the highest achievement levels in both the requirements and the profile of learning.

Districts would have to select a student assessment system and submit their plan to the Commissioner of Education for approval. The first plan was to be due by March 15, 1995. Because districts could test students differently, the approach avoided the problems associated with a mandated statewide test, forbidden by the Legislature.

The department would have the responsibility to consult with college admissions personnel and employers nationwide and then develop a student transcript. Additional information from individual districts and schools could supplement the transcript.

The draft stated that a school would have "great flexibility" in the way it delivered the instructional program. The board reiterated that it would not prescribe any "scheduling pattern, instructional strategy, or curriculum. . . ."

The Board of Education endorsed this latest draft.

Governor Carlson feels that the draft is moving in the right direction but still needs to be more understandable: "We are turning the corner from the abstract to the semi-abstract [but] . . . it's still not understandable at the local barbershop. . . . Are they where I am persuaded that I would want to send my daughter, Jessica, age 10, through the system? No." The governor has pledged that if draft four meets with major public objections, there will be further drafts. "This is a healthy debate. But right now it's a muddled debate, it really is."[75]

Indeed, as one looks back over Minnesota's history of OBE beginning in the late 1980s, there is no better word to describe the long debate than muddled.

WITH WHAT ARE WE LEFT . . . OR IS IT RIGHT?

The OBE debate has raised four issues that are crucial for contemporary education policy:

- How to judge quality in education.
- How to define outcomes.
- The Aquarian fallacy on the left.
- The nostalgist fallacy on the right.

Fortunately, despite the complexity of the issue, there is a policy strategy that can support establishment of legitimate academic standards while avoiding the pitfalls of transformational OBE. After discussing the issues that currently impede a solution, I will outline this approach.

Judging educational quality

The first issue for education policy today is how to judge educational quality. As noted, the focus on outcomes began as a legitimate effort to hold individuals, schools, and school systems accountable for

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[75]Nancy Livingston and Debra O'Connor, "It's Back to Basics for Grads," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 12, 1993, 14A.

their efforts and to appraise quality by investigating what children are learning. The alternative is to focus on inputs and judge quality primarily by the resources going into the system -- for example, costs per-pupil, number of courses taken or years spent in school, and teacher-to-student ratios. This approach, however, cannot tell us much about what children are actually learning.

If we reject the approach that judges quality by outcomes or results, the only alternative is to utilize one that emphasizes resources and bureaucratic control of the means of delivering education. Although some school systems are indeed impoverished and there are fiscal disparities between communities, focusing on resources will not solve the problem of too many of our young people not learning nearly enough to live, work, and compete as adults. As a whole, American public schools spend plenty of money. Public school per-pupil expenditures have tripled in real terms since the 1950s and doubled since the mid-1960s. They rose by a third during the 1980s.

Killing off accountability for results -- as a focus on resources does -- plays into the hands of education's special-interest groups. They are far more often the reason for the problem rather than the source of the solution to what ails America's schools. Eliminating accountability for results plays into the hands of the following groups:

- Civil-rights and child-advocacy groups who fear that tests and assessments will cause more poor and minority youngsters to fail.
- Multiculturalists who believe that what children should learn, and those from whom they should learn, should depend on their race and ethnicity.
- Teacher unions, which do not want real consequences and unpleasantness to fall on educators whose incompetence causes their students to fail to learn.
- Teacher-training institutions, the occupants of which believe that only graduates of accredited teacher- or administrator-training programs should be allowed to teach in or lead schools or school systems.
- Educational progressives who believe that competition among students harms a child's self-esteem -- or, when competition is applied to other levels of the school, will harm the reputation of a principal, a school, or a local or state superintendent.

In sum, killing off accountability plays into the hands of almost every education interest group that benefits from public money routinely allocated for itself, and is likely to lose those automatic dollars if the means of delivering educational services are radically deregulated and the focus turns to results. (Obviously, this encompassing indictment does not apply to all members of these groups, most notably leaders such as the aforementioned Al Shanker of the AFT.)

The Clinton Administration, in its recently enacted *Goals 2000 Educate America Act,* has contributed to the effort to shift the focus from what our children learn to what education bureaucrats spend. Though ostensibly committed to some version of goals and standards, most of what this plan establishes in law will do more to harm than help American elementary and secondary education. There are three particularly onerous provisions in *Goals 2000* that will undermine the establishment of genuine academic standards for all our children.

First, a 19-member panel -- the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) -- will certify education standards that states "voluntarily" submit to it. In reality, it will be a sort of national school board whose members will be the usual education-establishment suspects -- experts in school finance and equity and the long laundry list of educators, activists, and interest-group representatives. *Goals 2000* will make these bureaucrats more powerful than, for example, the National Governors' Association's Education Goals Panel. Because of this fact, the NGA withheld their endorsement of the final *Goals 2000* legislation.

Second, in judging educational quality, *Goals 2000* creates NESIC-sanctioned national delivery or opportunity-to-learn standards. The latter term is simply the new educational jargon for inputs and

services. These standards will measure whether there is an "adequate" supply of money, programs, and other human and physical resources in every school, every district, and every state. These are standards for schools, not for students. Moreover, these standards will certainly provide the impetus for new lawsuits aiming to force states to redistribute resources among various schools and districts.

Third, new federal dollars disbursed under *Goals 2000* may not be used for at least the next three years for "high stakes" tests that have consequences associated with them. This means that NESIC will not certify any test for promotion, high-school graduation, admission to college, or employment. The result will be neither a meaningful accountability system for educators nor any meaningful national testing system.

These three actions -- expanding federal control of education by the education establishment, emphasizing delivery standards for schools at the expense of performance standards for students, and blocking the development of an exam system -- do not bode well for the effort to focus on results. Other pending federal elementary and secondary education legislation mirrors this alarming trend. None of this will provide our students with an enhanced opportunity to learn. It will, however, provide education bureaucrats with expanded opportunities to spend, litigate, and regulate.

Examining and clarifying the fundamental and unbridgeable difference between judging educational quality from an inputs or resources perspective as opposed to an outcomes or results perspective (as we have done here) is instructive. Such an investigation demonstrates that the only hope for true education reform is to place primary emphasis on outcomes and results. If we accept the outcomes focus, the next challenge is to define outcomes in a way that allows for a standards-driven, results-centered, highly accountable education.

Confusion over what outcomes define

Today's educational fad -- transformational OBE -- has little in common with the content and performance outcomes in core academic areas espoused by those who gave the outcomes focus widespread national attention, particularly the nation's governors. Ironically, transformational OBE actually makes accountability impossible. Like many educational fads, it takes a sensible-sounding principle -- focusing on outcomes -- and hijacks its meaning so that its implementation will assure that its original purpose cannot be achieved. This raises a second issue for education policy: What is the word "outcome" to define?

As we have seen in the previous discussion, the typical "transformational" outcomes are vaguely worded and show little concern for core academic content. They are largely in the affective domain. They describe mental processes such as attitudes, dispositions, and sentiments --behavioral and social outcomes rather than knowledge, skills, and other cognitive outcomes.

The transformational outcomes often deal with issues that may not be proper concerns of a school. The following examples from draft state OBE documents describe mandatory outcomes for all students. In Ohio a graduate is expected to be able to "function as a responsible family member . . . [and] maintain physical, emotional, and social well-being." In Pennsylvania "each student shall gain knowledge and have exposure to different cultures and lifestyles." And in Minnesota, the state expects schools to ensure that "the graduate demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to . . . develop physical and emotional well-being." Unfortunately, such vague and inappropriate outcome statements are the rule rather than exceptions.

Furthermore, almost all OBE plans include long lists of outcomes, sometimes hundreds. The academic outcomes are few, and they are as vague as the nonacademic ones. They send no clear message about what knowledge, skills, and other understandings their designers expect children to master so that they can live, work, and compete successfully in the Twenty-First Century.

Having adopted, in principle, the idea and language of accountability -- a focus on results -- the education establishment presents governors, state legislatures, communities, and taxpayers with something else altogether. They propose outcomes -- developed mostly by overreaching education "reformers" -- that emphasize values, attitudes, and behavior and often mask quasi-political or ideologically correct positions. The outcomes are so vague as to make it impossible to measure whether students are achieving them in any useful and valid way. This approach undermines efforts to track and compare educational progress or failure. In short, the meaning now given to the term outcome-based education -- as reinterpreted by education "reformers" -- turns the process on its head and all but precludes real "results-oriented" accountability.

Many educators have never been comfortable with a focus on outcomes that would enable parents, politicians, and the general public to judge whether children were learning more and achieving at higher levels. If such a focus were instituted, educators could be held accountable for these results and expect consequences to follow -- positive or negative. Although politics made it impossible for educators to reject this orientation explicitly, they did continue their undercurrent of opposition. One important manifestation of this current is the effort to present an unclear and confusing definition of outcomes. In brief, education bureaucrats have used the language of accountability to avoid being held accountable.

How did this hijacking occur? Much of the problem occurs in the process and mechanisms used to generate the outcomes. Elected officials have given responsibility for specifying outcomes to panels or agencies dominated by people whose views on education do not agree with those held by the elected officials themselves. The results are predictable: Outcomes antithetical to the kind public officials thought they were mandating; accountability hijacked.

The fundamental problem with the outcomes being proposed by Spady and many others is in their conception of the purpose and role of education. This conception has deep roots in educational progressivism -- particularly the writings of John Dewey and his followers -- and in the viewpoint that it is possible and justifiable for educators to use the schools to create a new social order. Political analyst Irving Kristol provides a succinct description of this "progressive" viewpoint:

> [It] aims to develop the "creative potential" of "the whole person" . . . which must not be discouraged by grading, tracking, strict discipline, a dress code, or intellectual discrimination of any kind. Intellectual excellence may be acknowledged, but not rewarded. Social cooperation, a warm and friendly attitude toward one's fellows, a capacity for enthusiasm about anything -- from turtles to rap music -- are all signs, of equal worth, that a youngster is being prepared to be a good citizen in a democracy.[76]

It is clear that those who oppose what is currently called OBE are expressing legitimate concerns. If OBE means a focus on values, attitudes, and social skills, there is good reason to reject it.

The process of defining what our children should know and be able to do is too important to be controlled by state and local education bureaucrats. And it is far too vital and personal an issue to entrust to the tender mercies of an expanded federal bureaucracy. It must be under "civilian" control. It is the responsibility of policymakers to ensure that we select the correct outcomes. It is the responsibility of parents, voters, and other taxpayers to ensure that the policymakers do not lose their way. And the clear and unequivocal focus must be on core academic outcomes. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, says it well: "Those pushing for reform should wake up and realize that, as presently conceived [i.e., vaguely worded, numerous, fuzzy outcomes], outcomes-based education will do . . . nothing to raise student achievement."[77]

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[76]Irving Kristol, "The Inevitable Outcome of 'Outcomes'," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 1994, 14A.
[77]Albert Shanker, "Outrageous Outcomes," *New York Times*, September 12, 1993, 7B.

The Aquarian Fallacy

Another important question is what sorts of outcomes the state can reasonably prescribe in government schools and what obligations it assumes in doing so. This is a fundamental issue confronting contemporary education policy.

Private schools as well as public magnet, specialized, and even the new independent public schools called charter schools are forthright in declaring what knowledge, skills, and understandings -- even values, attitudes, and behaviors -- they want to instill in students. These are schools of choice, however, and parents are not forced to send their children to them. Therefore, these schools feel obligated to express clearly what students will learn. The outcomes they describe seldom harbor hidden political agendas, even if the curricula they embrace are sometimes controversial.

There is, however, a huge difference between what is required in these schools of choice and what a state can reasonably require everyone to learn in a public -- that is, compulsory -- school, especially where this involves the broad and controversial outcomes proposed by some OBE advocates. Forcing parents to send their children to school is one thing. But for the state to declare that students cannot graduate from a government school they must attend unless they demonstrate values and attitudes the state prescribes -- even when these values conflict with what those students and their families believe -- has all the trappings of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.* All this is to say that the "Age of Aquarius" life roles and outcomes espoused by transformational OBE betray an unjustifiably grand view of what compulsory government schools can require of the students forced to attend them.

The situation becomes even more complicated when the state provides no means to assist the exit of children whose parents do not want to send them to public schools inculcating Aquarian conceptions of life roles. When a government prescribes outcomes that include values and attitudes, it takes on a correlative responsibility. It must provide families with the widest possible range of schooling options so that they may exercise a choice that meets their needs. If not, it should come as no surprise that the level of discourse on the issue of government-prescribed outcomes will be shrill -- as it has indeed become.

If a state refuses to allow a wide range of alternatives and some means to support these choices, it is left with only one option: Prescribing for government schools carefully circumscribed outcomes that reflect only the broadest public consensus on what students should learn. Such an agreement is most likely to be a consensus not on affective (e.g., "transformational") outcomes but on cognitive ones -- academic knowledge, skills, and understandings all children must master so that they can live, work, and compete successfully.

The Nostalgist Fallacy

Many OBE supporters argue that their opponents are almost exclusively religious-right fundamentalist Christians. This in itself has no bearing, of course, on whether the OBE opponents are correct. Moreover, although it is true that fundamentalists generally oppose OBE, it is misleading to claim that they are the sole or even primary opponents, or that no one is raising valid objections.

For example, some analysts object that there is no widespread "hard" evidence that transformational OBE works. There are a few jurisdictions where some success seems to have been achieved, but there has been no compelling, widespread evidence of success with transformational OBE.

Other critics argue that transformational OBE will "dumb down" the curriculum. They say that schools using it will have to lower standards to the least common denominator because not all young people have the same capacity to learn to high standards.

A variation of this objection is that OBE will hold back gifted and talented youngsters. In schools offering OBE, such students will either have to wait for slow students to catch up, or be kept occupied by helping them keep pace through peer cooperative learning arrangements in which students are placed in groups to work together on a project or subject.

Moreover, almost everyone acknowledges that implementing OBE will cost more money -- probably much more -- than the current system does. Teachers will have to be retrained, curricula revised, and new tests developed to take the place of traditional paper-and-pencil multiple-choice tests. This prospect leads some critics to ask the obvious question: Why spend more money on a wide-scale effort when there is no widespread evidence indicating that OBE works?

Pennsylvania has provided a telling example of opposition to OBE that was clearly not inspired by religious-right fundamentalists. The state affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers withheld endorsement of Pennsylvania's OBE proposal. The union believed that the state's OBE outcomes were not sufficiently academic.

While acknowledging that OBE has evoked a wide variety of objections and opponents, one can argue that many religious fundamentalists and others on the right generally unite behind one major objection. They believe that the schools and curricula of a bygone era are sufficient for our children today. From this perspective, schools should not attempt to teach children to think critically, weigh evidence, reason analytically and independently, or reach conclusions contrary to "established tradition."

Robert Simonds, President of the California-based National Society of Christian Educators and Citizens for Excellence in Education, is recognized as a national leader in the fight to oppose OBE. In a recent article, he wrote, "To them [the supporters of OBE, among whom he includes Theodore Sizer and John Goodlad], 'critical thinking' means teaching children to empty themselves of their own values (transmitted from parents, church, and culture) and accept a set of suggested values."[78] For Simonds and many others, critical thinking is an assault on religious faith and family values. In particular, to those whose world is bounded and defined by religious faith, it would be sacrilegious to oblige their children to become critical thinkers and independent questioners of authority.

One can understand and accept that parents become upset and dismayed when government schools teach doctrines that offend their deepest beliefs. And as mentioned, the situation is made more difficult when these families cannot exit the system unless they can afford a private school or the state allows families the option of home schooling. It is quite another thing, however, to believe that all government schools should refrain from teaching children the knowledge, skills, and understandings that allow them to become thoughtful, critical, and productive citizens. This issue poses a fourth dilemma for contemporary education policy. Those committed to education reform -- especially conservatives -- must resist the easy temptation to support a nostalgic view that the content and approaches to teaching used in government schools when today's adults were in school are good enough for today's children. They are not.

We must insist that today's children learn to higher standards than those faced by most prior generations of Americans. This process involves combining an extensive knowledge of facts and specifics -- those that make up what E.D. Hirsch calls our "cultural literacy" -- with the ability to think critically, understand complex relationships, and solve complicated problems. To give all children a chance to develop those abilities is a legitimate aspiration for public authorities.

Unholy alliance

There is no single remedy, no "silver bullet" that will cure the core education problem America faces: weak academic achievement, even among those who complete formal schooling. I have argued that the

[78]Robert Simonds, "A Plea for Children," *Educational Leadership* (December 1993/January 1994), 15.

starting point for a remedy must be a focus on outcomes, not inputs or resources. Decades of preoccupation with inputs have led to the current sorry state: America's young people are not learning nearly enough for their or the nation's good.

The challenge we face is daunting. We must define outcomes in a way that allows for a standards-driven, results-centered, highly accountable education. While being plural and diverse in the kinds of institutions we create and the methods and means we use to reach standards, schools must have one aim: To prepare our young people to live, work, and compete successfully in the next century.

Unfortunately, many on both the left (the Aquarians) and the right (the nostalgists) are assaulting those who support the sound and common-sense notion that we should judge educational quality by what and how well children actually learn.

The Aquarians propose a collection of nebulous life roles, values, and attitudes rather than measurable academic outcomes. The standards they would create are federally sanctioned delivery standards that measure whether schools have enough resources to provide students with an "opportunity to learn." All this has one end: killing off accountability for results.

The nostalgists criticize the left's Aquarian life roles. Their grievances have more merit, however, than the alternative they propose: a return to the content and methods of a bygone era.

Even more unfortunate is the fact that most education reformers of a conservative perspective have joined the nostalgists' assault or remained silent on the issue. Rarely have they articulated a different view that tries to combine the virtues and values of the past with the changed requirements and demands of today's world. This reticence plays into the hands of those who focus on inputs and spending rather than achievement results.

Ironically, the silent surrender of these conservative reformers leaves the door open for an unvoiced, unholy, and bizarre alliance: The left and education establishment, who favor more money for education and equalizing resources regardless of need and the taxpayers' ability to support such changes, and parts of the right, who fear that public schools will never accommodate their values. The OBE debate shows that education policy -- like politics -- makes for strange very bedfellows.

A twofold policy strategy

I believe that a twofold policy strategy provides a plausible way out of this thicket. First, we need high, uniform, but sensibly drafted academic standards for all our children and a system of accountability with real consequences for success and failure based on reaching those standards. Second, we need great diversity in the nature of schools and in the ways professional educators produce those results, with families free to choose those schools that best meet their needs.

Standard and tests. The nation's governors have continued to lead the chorus of those who speak forcefully on the need for high national outcome standards defining what all students should know and do so that they can live, work, and compete successfully as adults. Working through the bipartisan National Education Goals Panel, they reaffirmed this position in November 1993, approving a statement of five general principles that should guide adoption of national standards.[79]

First, national outcome standards should be *voluntary*. No federal effort should be inaugurated to require states and communities to use them.

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[79]National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), "Promises to Keep: Creating High Standards for American Students" (Washington, D.C.: NEGP, November 1993), see especially "Executive Summary," D56-D60.

Next, standards should address core *academic* areas. They should not deal with nonacademic concerns such as students' values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Third, national standards must be *world class*. While being uniquely American, the standards should be as rigorous as what other countries expect of their students.

Fourth, policymakers should use a broad-based, participatory, consensus-building process to develop outcome standards. This *"bottom-up"* process should include educators, parents, and community leaders.

Finally, standards must be *useful and adaptable*. States and communities must be able to design their own curricular plans using the broad outlines suggested by the standards. And the number of standards should be limited to the most important knowledge, skills, and understandings we expect students to learn.

These standards clarify expectations about what we want all our children to learn. They are of two kinds. Content standards define what students should know and be able to do. Performance standards define what level of learning is good enough. Several national efforts now underway are doing useful work in developing these standards. But states and communities are where the action should be in defining these standards. It is at those levels that disputes are likely to be encountered and need to be resolved.

None of this should involve standardization or a national curriculum. There must not be any federal demand to read certain books, teach specific courses in a fixed order, or meet precise federal graduation requirements. These and other issues should be decided by states and communities.

Also, good tests are needed, to determine whether and how well students are learning what is taught. These exams, however, would not be more of the same standardized tests we have now, where many of our children live in a Lake Wobegon world where most are above average. These would be tests that teachers teach to and that have consequences for graduation, employment, and higher education. For those who work in the schools, compensation and advancement would be based on these results.

These tests examining the academic learning of students also need to permit individual student results to be compared across schoolrooms, schools, districts, the states, the nation, and internationally. And although tests are an important indicator of success, they are not the only ones. Other types of timely, reliable, and comparable information such as college entrance rates and placement in the workforce must be collected and made understandable to the public.

We should begin using the best testing tools we have rather than wait for the perfect tests. To assure fairness, such a system should be implemented in phases and be independent of those who govern, manage, and teach in the schools.

Almost every modern society the United States trades or competes with has woven these elements into its education system. We owe at least as much to our young people, especially those we label "at risk and disadvantaged." For them in particular, expectations in school are almost always low and the curriculum watered down. Demanding less of these children does not provide equity. It is served by demanding much of all and helping everyone meet these standards.

In summary, standards and tests comprise one element of a sensible twofold education policy strategy we should pursue as a nation.

Diversity and choice. The second element of this twofold policy strategy is great diversity in the types of schools children can attend, the approaches to instruction professionals use, and the

preparation individuals receive to become educators, with families free to choose the schools which best meet their needs.

For the most part, while the world, our country, and our families have changed, all of them quite dramatically, our schools have not. Though some diversity has always been a part of our nation's schools -- open schools, alternative schools, Montessori schools, magnet schools -- it has been a minor element. The predominant model today is an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. day, Monday through Friday, nine months a year, with one teacher trained by a university school of education, lecturing most of the time, using little more than the technology of the book. We are too big and diverse a country to expect this one school model to fit everyone's needs. Schools must become much more distinctive and diverse to meet the different needs, values, styles, traditions, and concerns of many different young people, families, educators, and communities. This process is taking place, though far too slowly.

As states and communities begin to adopt standards and adapt them to their different situations, they will focus attention on and judge quality by the academic results students achieve. There will be less monopoly control and centralized government regulation of schools, what they do, and of how educational services are delivered. This decentralization will lead to greater diversity, rather than uniformity, in the ways schools organize and configure themselves and in the methods and techniques teachers use to teach to these high standards.

Deregulation must also apply to the education profession. In our quest for educators, we cannot limit ourselves to graduates of teacher or administrator training programs. We need to foster different paths into the classroom and the administrator's office. Individuals with sound character who know their subjects, want to teach children, and are willing to work with master teachers to learn the art and craft of teaching should be permitted to teach or administer in America's schools.

One example of the effort to give families more choices of distinctive schools and programs is the move to create independent public schools -- what some call charter or outcome schools. Led by Minnesota, about 10 states have enacted charter-school legislation, and several others are considering it. Though details vary by state, such plans allow teachers and other qualified individuals, including parents, to request permission from a designated local or state authority to start a new charter school. These schools of choice -- teaching to world-class standards of achievement -- attract students. No one is assigned to them.

The terms of the charter free teachers from the regulations and bureaucratic red tape that strangle originality and diversity. In exchange, the teachers are held accountable (within realistic bounds, of course) for student learning and mastering agreed-upon knowledge and skills. In short, teachers swap red tape for results and develop a system of accountability based on well-defined outcomes -- the original deal first proposed by the governors in 1985 and reiterated at the Education Summit in 1989.

Ted Kolderie says, "The object of charter schools is not just to create a few good schools [but] . . . to improve all schools. Districts do not want to lose kids and the money that comes with them. They will make improvements . . . to attract kids back from charter schools or . . . before a charter even appears."[80]

In this and other examples, a new understanding of the nature of a "public" school and its governance begins to emerge. Any school that embraces world-class standards, meets nondiscrimination, health, and safety requirements, and is held accountable for its results becomes a public school, without reference to whether a government school board owns, operates, or funds it. The responsibility of a public school board is to make sure that families have the broadest number of enrollment options available to them and that these schools charge reasonable prices, and then hold the schools accountable

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[80]R. Craig Sautter, *Charter Schools: A New Breed of Public Schools* (Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1993), 5, quoting Kolderie; see also Ted Kolderie, "Charter Schools: The States Begin to Withdraw the 'Exclusive'," *Network News and Views*, February 1994, 103-108.

for their academic results. This approach could lead to boards contracting out services, including the management of schools by for-profit groups.

If we succeed in creating schools that focus on results -- by teaching to high, world-class standards, providing teachers and principals with less red tape and more flexibility, and making schools increasingly diverse -- it will make less and less sense to have education bureaucrats or courts assign children to schools. Schools will attract students. By their choices, parents will keep the standards high, because they will have the ability to vote with their feet -- and their pocketbooks. The present monopoly of education by government schools must be overcome.

The extent of this choice is controversial. If public schools are defined and reconfigured in the way suggested here, much of what needs to be done can occur under public-school choice. Though many would disagree, I believe that choice plans should include private schools, including religious ones. These schools should have the option to become part of any publicly funded choice system, subject to the same small amount of regulation applied to the "reinvented" public schools described here. Such plans could also provide some help to parents who choose to send their children to any lawfully authorized home school.

There are various proposals as to how schools would receive money under a choice plan that includes today's nongovernment schools. We should do on the elementary and secondary levels what we did on the university level after World War II: Create a G.I. Bill for children, which would provide families with scholarship dollars to spend at the school of their choice or even purchase additional academic services for their child. Since these scholarship dollars would be aid to families, not to schools, they could be used at any lawfully operating school -- public, private, or religious. Aid to families has been recognized by the Supreme Court as avoiding the constitutional difficulties that exist now under the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.[81]

Concluding word

Pursuing the twofold strategy suggested here will lead to a different and renewed idea of education, one that serves the public interest and prepares our young people to live, work, and compete in the next century. The resulting system will have high academic standards for all students, test for results, and provide teachers and principals with more flexibility and less red tape while giving families more choices among schools. Viewed in this way, an education that focuses on outcomes is a cure for what ails America's schools.

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[81]For an overview of the constitutionality of plans to give families more choices among all schools, see Amy Stuart Wells and Stuart Biegel, "Public Funds for Private Schools: Political and First Amendment Considerations," *American Journal of Education* (May 1993); Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., ed., *Private Schools and the Public Good* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), especially Part 3: Constitutional Perspectives. See also Congressional Research Service, *Memorandum on the Constitutionality of Education Vouchers* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, January 1, 1992), 1-5; Michael W. McConnell, "Multiculturalism, Majoritarianism, and Educational Choice: What Does Our Constitutional Tradition Have to Say?" *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 123 (1991), especially 134-151. Even Lawrence Tribe, a well-known and politically liberal constitutional scholar, sees no serious constitutional questions. He has said, "Given the existing doctrine about the separation of church and state, I do not see a serious First Amendment problem in a reasonably written voucher program." See comments by Tribe and other legal authorities: "Breaking the Church-State Wall," *Time*, September 16, 1991, 55; and "Can Vouchers Hurdle Church-State Wall?" *The New York Times*, June 12, 1991, 5B. And of particular pertinence in Minnesota, see Jon S. Lerner, "The Constitutional Case for Universal School Choice in Minnesota," Center of the American Experiment, October 1993. The following Supreme Court cases on this issue are especially noteworthy: *Mueller v Allen*, 463 US 368 (1983); *Witters v Washington Department of Services for the Blind*, 474 US 481 (1986). The 1993 Supreme Court case of *Zobrest v Catalina Foothills School District*, No. 92-94, presented the related question of whether the Establishment Clause prevents a government from providing a sign-language interpreter to a deaf child in a sectarian high school when it is part of a general program of providing interpreters to all with disabilities. The Court ruled that the Establishment Clause does not bar the provision of a publicly funded sign interpreter for a deaf child who attends a Catholic school.

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